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ABSTRACT

This publication reports findings from the 1980 Census and from Current Population Survey studies conducted in 1981 and 1982 by the United States Bureau of the Census regarding characteristics of the 12,320,000 noninstitutionalized disabled Americans between 16 and 64 years of age. Tables, figures, and text provide information on age distribution, educational attainment, residential patterns, marital status, labor force participation, income and economic status, and occupational categories of this population. The "typical" working-age disabled American is described as: 50 years of age; a high school graduate; married; not in the labor force; and having about $5,000 in income from all sources in 1980. (CB)

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DISABLED ADULTS IN AMERICA

A STATISTICAL REPORT DRAWN FROM CENSUS BUREAU DATA

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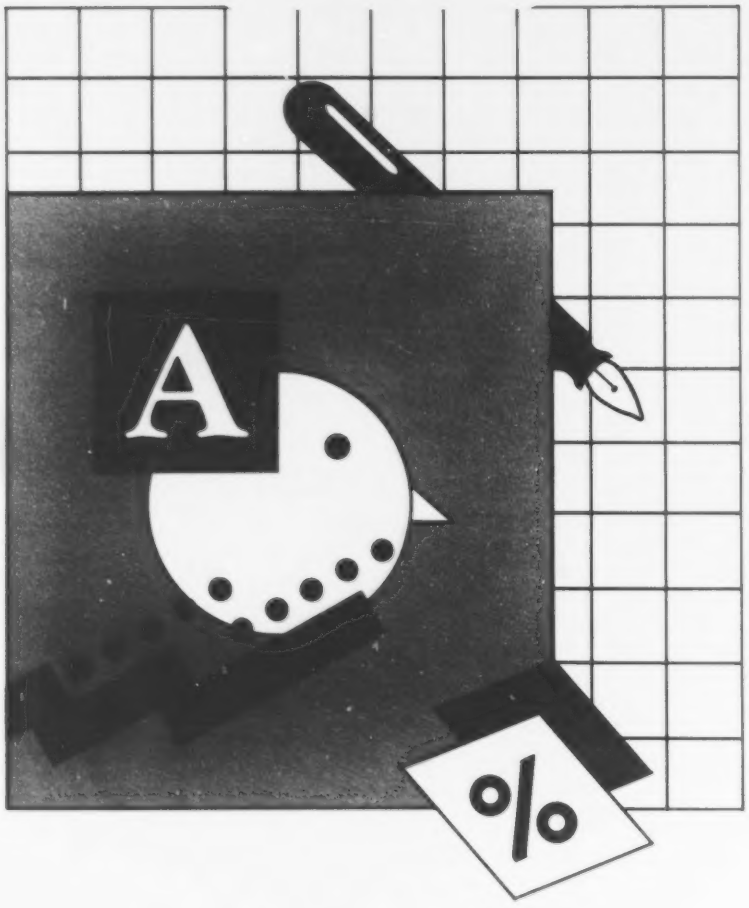

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About the Author

Frank Bowe, Ph.D, L.L.D., is author, lecturer, businessman, husband and father. His newest book, *Personal Computers and Special Needs,* published by Sybex, Inc., of Berkeley, CA, in the summer of 1984, is about how personal computers can help handicapped people. He also wrote *Handicapping America, Rehabilitating America,* and *Comeback,* all for Harper & Row. As a public speaker, he averages forty lectures annually. FBA Inc., his management consulting company, works with AT&T and other large corporations; the FBA—AT&T partnership produced "Employing Persons with Disabilities," a videotape distributed by AT&T, and *Reasonable Accomodations Handbook,* a comprehensive guide to technology in employment. Dr. Bowe lives with his wife of ten years and two daughters in Lawrence, Long Island, New York, where he is now working on his first novel.

Author's Note

This publication reports upon findings from the 1980 Census and from Current Population Survey studies conducted in 1981 and 1982 by the Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce. The author acknowledges the assistance of John McNeil and Lawrence Haber of the population division, Bureau of the Census, and Bernard Posner of the President's Committee staff. Their help was equally valuable in the preparation of the three companion volumes which accompany this publication: *Disabled Women in America, Black Adults with Disabilities, and Disabled Adults of Hispanic Origin.*

Most data in this report come from the 1981 and 1982 general population sample studies conducted by the Bureau of the Census; the findings of these two Current Population Survey studies were comparable and were generally in agreement with the limited data available from the 1980 Census at the time this publication went to press. The reader's attention is called to the citations acompanying each chart, which provide the data source. A more technical report is

available from the U.S. Government Printing Office, *Labor Force Status and Other Characteristics of Persons With a Work Disability*, which reports upon findings from the 1982 Current Population Survey.

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Thumbnail Sketches

ADULTS AGED 16-64 AND NOT IN INSTITUTIONS

The "typical" working-aged American:

- is 34 years of age
- is a high school graduate
- is married
- is in the labor force
- works full time
- had about $8,000 in income from all sources in 1980

The "typical" working-age disabled American:

- is 50 years of age
- is a high school graduate
- is married
- is not in the labor force
- does not work full- or part-time
- had about $5,000 in income from all sources in 1980

Source: Current Population Survey, March 1981

Introduction

Statistical surveys of disabled Americans are of urgent national importance. We want to know how many persons have disabilities.

Statistical surveys of disabled Americans are of urgent national importance. We want to know how many persons have disabilities. We need to know where these people live and what income, employment, education, and residential characteristics they present. Such studies help us plan national policies and programs.

We have two basic ways of gathering the data we need. The first, "household surveys," collects information about persons in the general population, some of whom are disabled and some not. The second, "program studies," generate statistics about persons who participate in or benefit from a particular program of services or assistance.

By doing program studies, we learn more about the people we are now serving. But such surveys tell us little if anything about persons who are not being helped. That is why household surveys are so important: they help us learn not only about those who are enrolled in national programs but also about those we have not reached and helped.

As important as household surveys are, they are limited in how much they can tell us. From them, we obtain "broad brush" portraits of a population. By contrast, program studies can portray in detail the smaller group of people they survey.

The 1980 Census and follow-along Current Population Survey studies explored in this publication were household surveys.

Data now available from these surveys do in fact answer some of our questions. But these same data raise other questions in turn.

The findings from these national studies are restricted in several important ways. First, they tell us nothing about persons with disabilities who reside in institutions. Second, they reveal nothing about disabled people under age 16 or over age 64. Third, they tell us nothing about people who are disabled but who did not report such disabilities to the census takers.

Disability statistics tend to be peculiarly frustrating. Each of the major national surveys we have done since 1966 has been less than satisfying; each yielded numbers which must be interpreted more as estimates than an anything else. A very large part of the problem arises from the term "disabled"—and how we define that word.

Two trained observers counting women in a neighborhood likely will arrive at about the same result because both, looking at the same person, will agree whether or not that individual is a woman. Similarly, two observers counting black individuals will tend to arrive at very similar numbers.

This is not nearly so true when the object of the study is to count disabled persons.

Two trained observers may very well differ as to whether a given individual is or is not "disabled." The problems multiply when the studies rely, as did those we examine here, upon questions asked of or about the respondents. The questions themselves may screen out some legitimately disabled persons; less often, they may screen in some individuals who may not be disabled. But on the whole, the numbers are reliable.

The problems are not unique to household surveys; we encounter very similar problems in program studies.

All of which is to introduce a note of caution.

The data from the 1980 Census and from the 1981 and 1982 Current Population Survey studies reported in this booklet are important; they merit publication by the President's Committee. But they must be read with care.

A few words about words. "The general population," "the average American," and "the typical American" refer to all noninstitutionalized persons aged 16-64, disabled as well as nondisabled. Most com-

parisons in this book are between two subgroups of the general population: those who report disability and those who do not.

Some other terms used often in this book:

Disability. People were classified as disabled if they reported a health problem or disability which prevented them from working or limited the amount or kind of work they could do, if they reported a service-connected disability, if they ever retired from or left a job for health reasons, if they did not work in the survey week because of disability, if they did not work at all the year before due to illness or disability, if they were under 65 years of age but covered by Medicare, or if they were under 65 years of age and received Supplemental Security Income benefits.

Not in Labor Force. All civilians not classified as employed or unemployed were classified as "not in the labor force."

Unemployed. People were classified as unemployed if they reported no employment during the survey week but were available for work, had sought employment during the preceding four weeks or were waiting to be called back to or to start a job. Readers should recall that the unemployment rate is a function of the number of persons seeking work but unable to find it and not a proportion of persons seeking work compared with all persons aged 16-64.

Executive Summary

The 1980 Census shows that 12,320,000 Americans between the ages of 16 and 64 who are not in institutions report a disability which limits the amount or kind of work they can do or prevents them from working altogether. This group represents 8.5% of the 144,667,000 Americans of working age, or slightly more than one in twelve.

Fully 51% of all persons reporting a work disability say they are prevented by that disability from working.

Fully 51% of all persons reporting a work disability say they are prevented by that disability from working.

The 1981 and 1982 Current Population Survey studies data tell us that disabled Americans are, on average, *much older* than are working-age persons without disabilities. While the average nondisabled working-age American is 34 years of age, the typical disabled person of working age is 50 years old.

Disabled persons are *much less well-educated* than are nondisabled persons. While nearly three out of every four persons without disabilities have at least a high-school education, the rate among persons with disabilities is just slightly more than one in every two.

The typical working-age nondisabled American works. By contrast, while many disabled people hold well-paying jobs, the average disabled individual aged 16-64 *does not work*. Only one disabled person in every three even participated in the labor force.

Among those who work, disabled and nondisabled people tend to have *similar kinds of jobs*. And earnings by those working full time year round are very similar regardless of disability status.

Largely because relatively few work, disabled people are *much poorer* than are persons with no disabilities. A disabled working-age person is two and one-half times as likely to have an income from all sources that falls below the poverty line than is a nondisabled person.

In most other respects, the characteristics surveyed by the Bureau of the Census are similar between disabled and nondisabled working-

age individuals. Two-thirds in each group live in cities. More than half in each population are married.

The news is both good and bad. It is heartening to see that full-time workers with disabilities earn about as much as do their nondisabled counterparts. But the fact that few are working spurs us to redouble our efforts to enhance employment of disabled people.

The Size of the Population

Awareness of disability increased greatly during the 1970's.

Generating greater public consciousness about and acceptance of disability were the pivotal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the landmark Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, and the three historic events of 1977: the emergence of disabled people themselves as a major social and civil-rights force in our country, the issuance of Federal regulations implementing the civil-rights provisions contained in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the first-ever White House Conference on Handicapped Individuals. Media attention to disability multiplied the effect of these events. While such magazines as *Time, Newsweek,* and *U.S. News & World Report* moved disability coverage from the "medical" to the "life/style" and "justice" sections, television, movies, and radio devoted greatly expanded attention to disability-related accidents and issues.

What usually happens when the general public becomes more tolerant about and conscious of a given health condition is that more persons with disabilities become willing to stand up and be counted. Accordingly, we would expect more Americans in 1980 to declare disability to census-takers than did in 1970.

And in fact this happened but in an interesting way.

The proportion of Americans of working age who admitted to disability did not rise, as we might have expected. But the proportion reporting that they were prevented from working by a disabling condition did.

Twice as many people as we would have expected from population growth alone told census-takers that they had a disability which prevented them from working. While the working-age population in our country grew 20% between 1970 and 1980, the number prevented from working increased fully 39%.

But only half as many people as we would have expected from population growth alone said they had a work disability. The number

While the working-age population in our country grew 20% between 1970 and 1980, the number prevented from working increased fully 39%.

of persons reporting such a disability was only 10% larger in 1980 than it was in 1970.

What apparently happened is this.

People having work disabilities seemed less likely in 1980 than in 1970 to declare these disabilities if they were employed. That is, if they had jobs, they tended to respond negatively to the question the Census Bureau asked in the 1980 Census: "Does this person have a physical, mental or other health condition which has lasted 6 months and which limits the kind or amount of work this person can do at a job?"

That makes sense. You may have a disability and it may have lasted six months or longer, but if it does not restrict your ability to work at the job you have, you may very well answer "No" when asked such a question.

This leaves a relatively smaller body of persons classified as having a work disability than would be the case otherwise. So it is not surprising that of the persons remaining in this category, proportionally more have a work disability that prevents them from working.

Let's look at the 1980 Census findings now. Six Americans in ten were in the 16-64 noninstitutionalized population of the United States when the survey was taken. In a country of 232 million persons of all ages, 62% or 144,667,000 were aged 16-64 and were not in institutions. This is the base "working-age" population.

Of these 144,677,000 Americans, 12,320,000 reported a disability that interfered with their ability to work. And 51% of these people said they were prevented from working altogether.

The 1970 Census also asked questions about disability.

In that survey, 11,265,000 persons reported a work disability. This was 9.4% of the 120,228,000 Americans aged 16 to 64 and not in

institutions at the time the 1970 Census was conducted.

Of the 11,265,000 work-disabled persons, 4,607,000 were prevented by their disability or disabilities from working. This was 41% of all work-disabled persons in the age range and 3.8% of all Americans of working age.

Table 1 summarizes these data from the 1980 and 1970 Census studies.

Three differences between the two studies merit special emphasis.

While the general population (all ages) grew 13.4% in ten years, the working-age population rose fully 20%, largely because of the baby-boom "pig-in-a-python" effect (the youngest baby-boomers, those born in 1964, turned 16 in 1980).

The work-disabled population of working age grew 10% in those 10 years.

The prevented-from-working disabled population aged 16 to 64 and not in institutions rose 39% in ten years. By 1980, this group comprised more than half (51%) of all work-disabled persons in the age range.

And the restrictions applicable to both surveys bear repeating. These numbers include only persons aged 16-64; they exclude the two out of every five Americans under age 16 or over age 64. We know from Social Security Adminstration, National Center for Health Statistics, and other government studies that several million children under age 16 are disabled and that several million persons over age 65 are disabled. In fact, the 1982 Current Population Survey estimated that, in the nation's 65-74 noninstitutionalized population, some 2,125,000 men and 2,533,000 women were disabled; they represented 31.4% of all men and 28.4% of all women in that age range. All of these disabled children and senior citizens are *excluded* from the data reported in this publication.

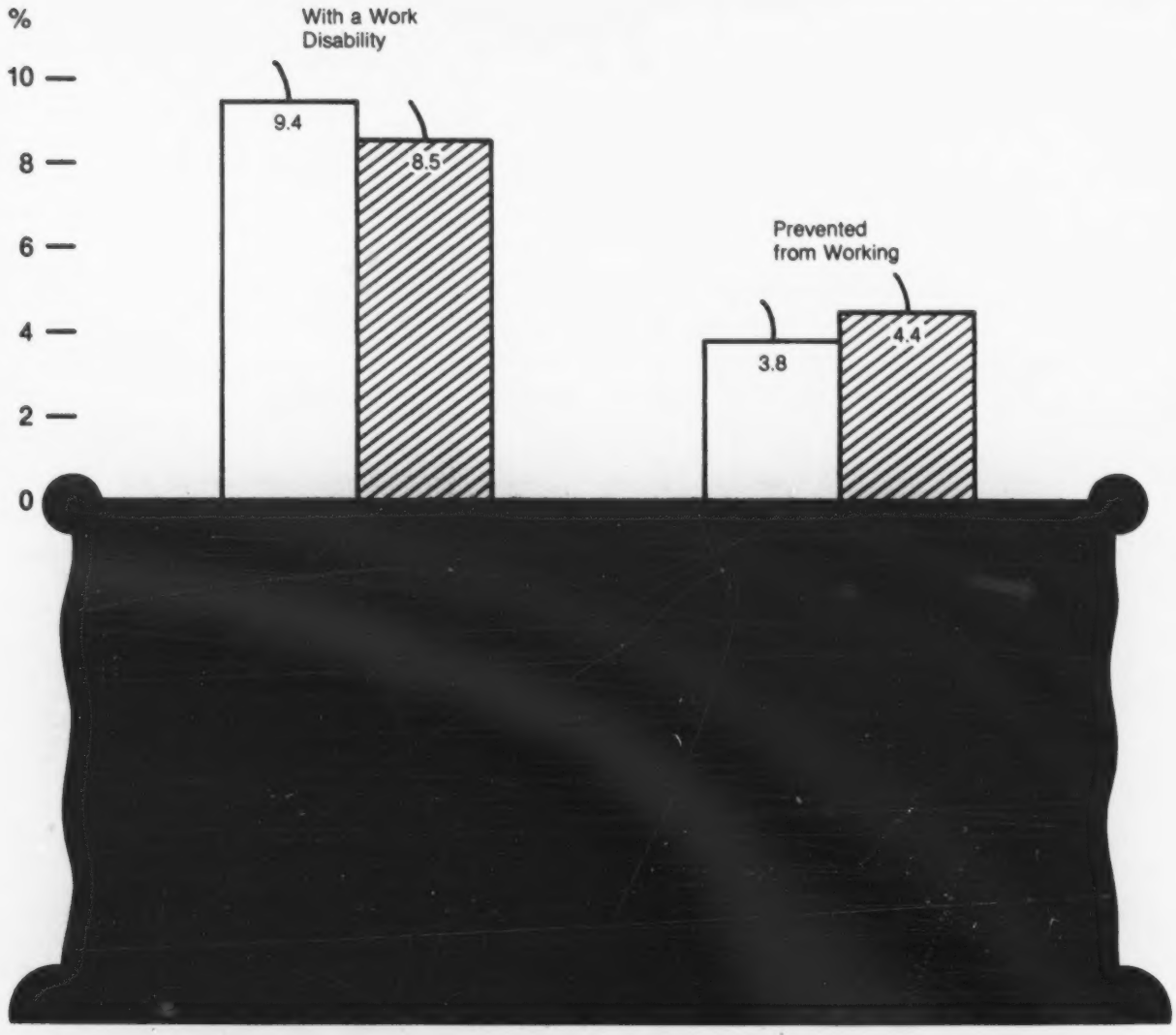
Similarly, the numbers in Table 1 exclude all persons who reside in institutions, including those who have disabilities. Some estimates place the number of disabled individuals living in institutions at about two million.

And the data exclude all persons who chose, for one reason or another, not to declare disability to the survey takers.

Our focus is upon what is usually called the "working-age" population of persons with work disabilities. We are most interested in employment. Although the data in this report do not provide total estimates of the prevalence and incidence of disability in America, they do help us understand employment by persons of working age who have work disabilities.

Table 1

Americans Aged 16-64 and Not in Institutions, by Work Disability and Prevented-From-Working Status: 1970 and 1980 Census



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Characteristics of the Population

The average age of working-age disabled persons is 50; by contrast, the typical nondisabled individual in the working-age population is just 34 years of age.

Age

One of the most striking differences between the disabled and nondisabled members of the general population is that of age distribution. Disabled persons are *much older* on average. In fact, the age-range distributions of the disabled and nondisabled groups are almost mirror images of each other. While each older body of disabled persons tends to be larger, the opposite is true among nondisabled individuals. As Table 2 illustrates, six in ten (60.5%) of all disabled persons in the working-age noninstitutionalized population are aged 45-64, as against only 27.4% of nondisabled individuals.

Another way to look at the same data is to ask: What proportion of the general population (disabled and nondisabled) of working-age persons is disabled? As Figure 1 shows us, the answer varies greatly depending upon which age-range we consider. Only one out of every 27 members of the general population aged 16-24 is disabled, but the proportion among those aged 55-64 is almost one in four.

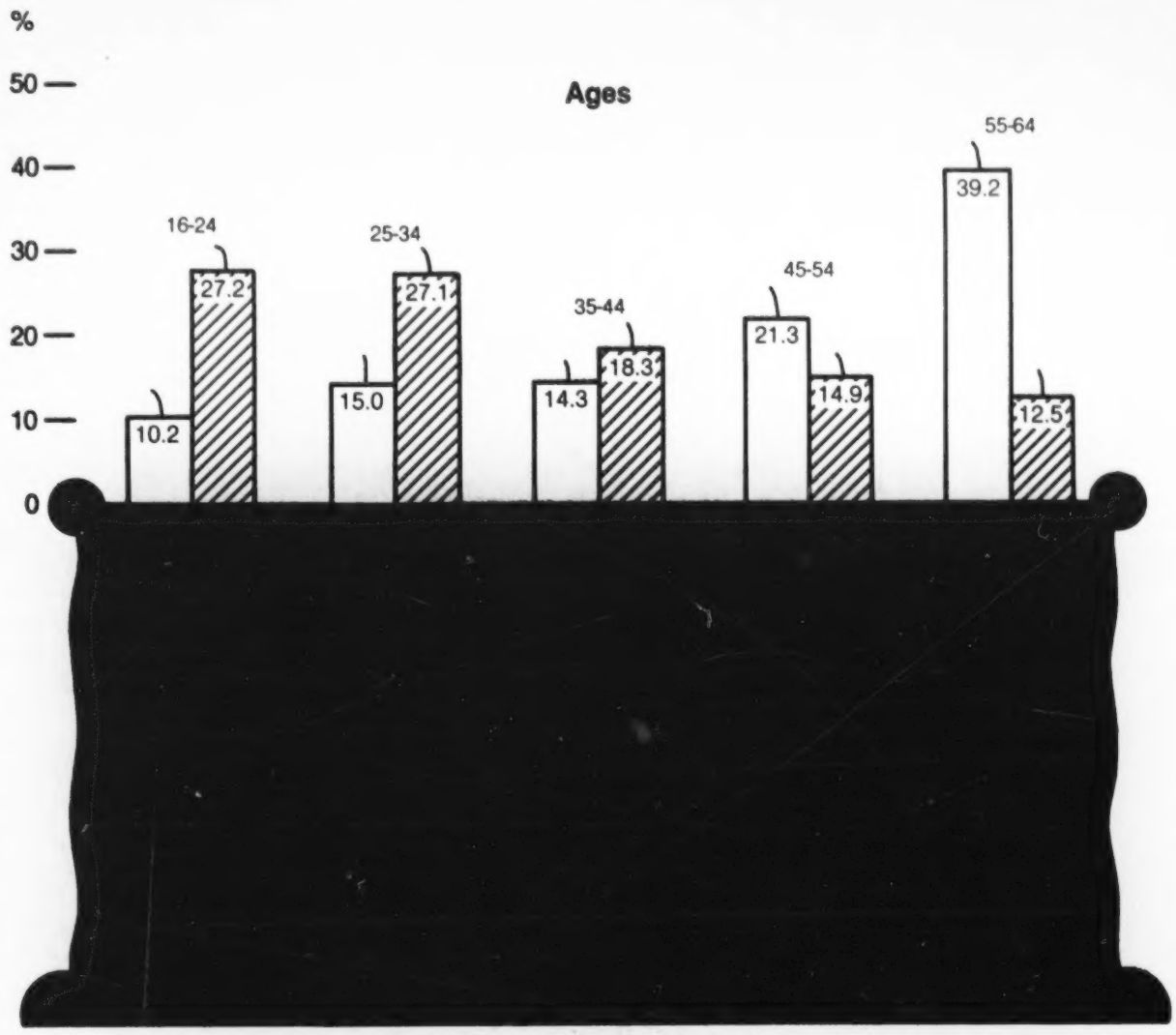
The average age of working-age disabled persons is 50; by contrast, the typical nondisabled individual in the working-age population is just 34 years of age.

These data strongly suggest that the issues we confront when we plan policies and programs for disabled persons are intimately linked to those we address when we are concerned with older Americans. It makes sense to focus upon age when we discuss disability, and to look at disability when we consider age. The two populations intersect in a major way. To isolate disability from age when thinking about disabled people is to ignore a central characteristic of the American population.

The 1982 Current Population Survey reveals that 28.4% of women and 31.4% of men aged 65-74 report a disability.

Table 2

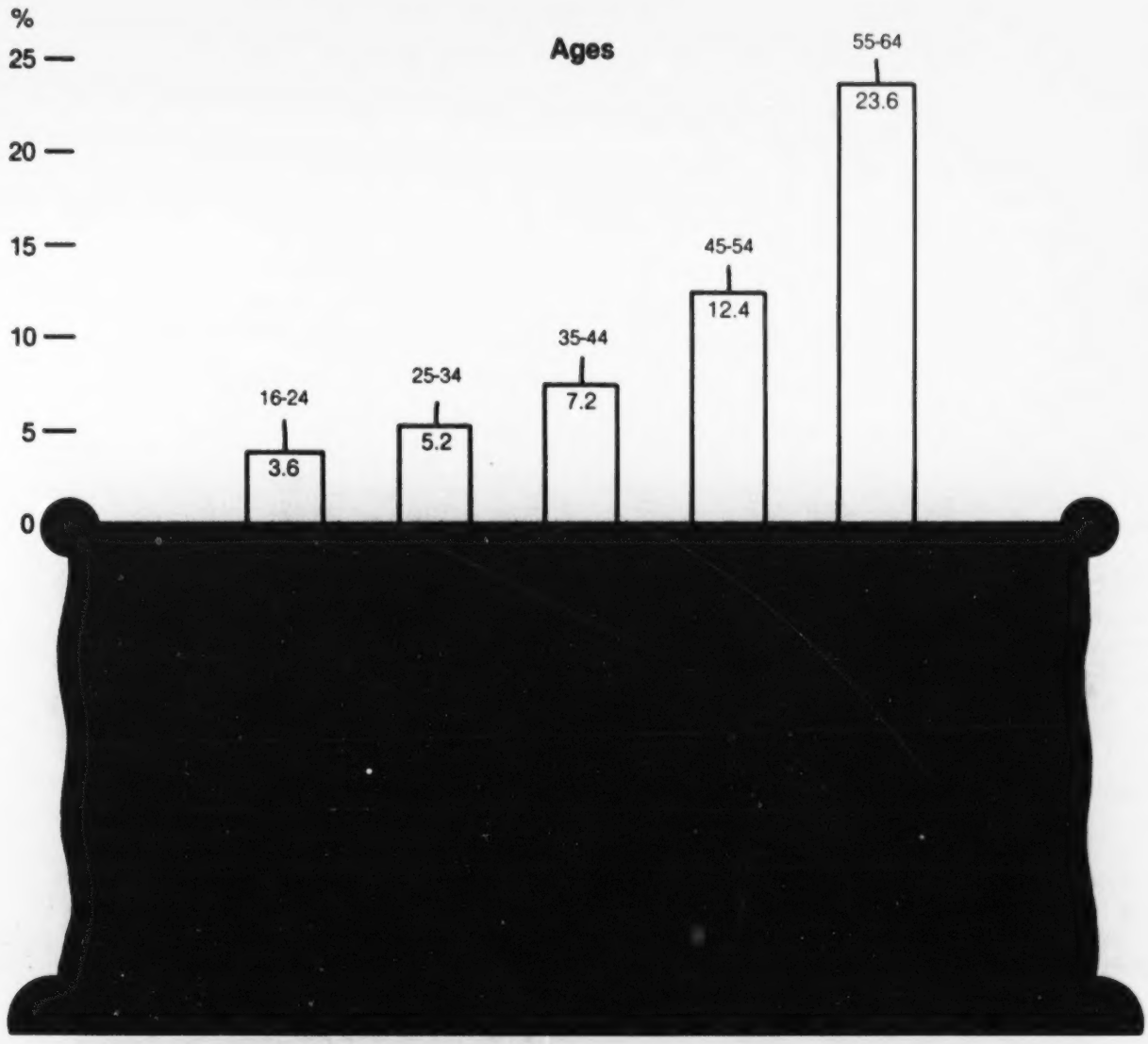
Age-Range Distributions: Disabled and Nondisabled Populations Aged 16-64 and Not in Institutions



Source: Current Population Survey, March 1981

Figure 1

Proportions of General Population Having Work Disabilities, by Age Range



Source: Current Population Survey, March 1981

To take just one of the many policy questions raised by the fact that so large a proportion of the disabled population is over age 45, consider the fact that vocational rehabilitation programs traditionally have concentrated their resources upon helping younger persons with disabilities. Should our country make a major commitment to rehabilitation with older disabled persons? The question takes on additional importance when we consider that the average American who reaches age 65 has about 15 more years of life expectancy ahead of him or her. If we as a nation want those years to be productive ones, we need to reconsider our policy on early retirement and on rehabilitation of older workers.

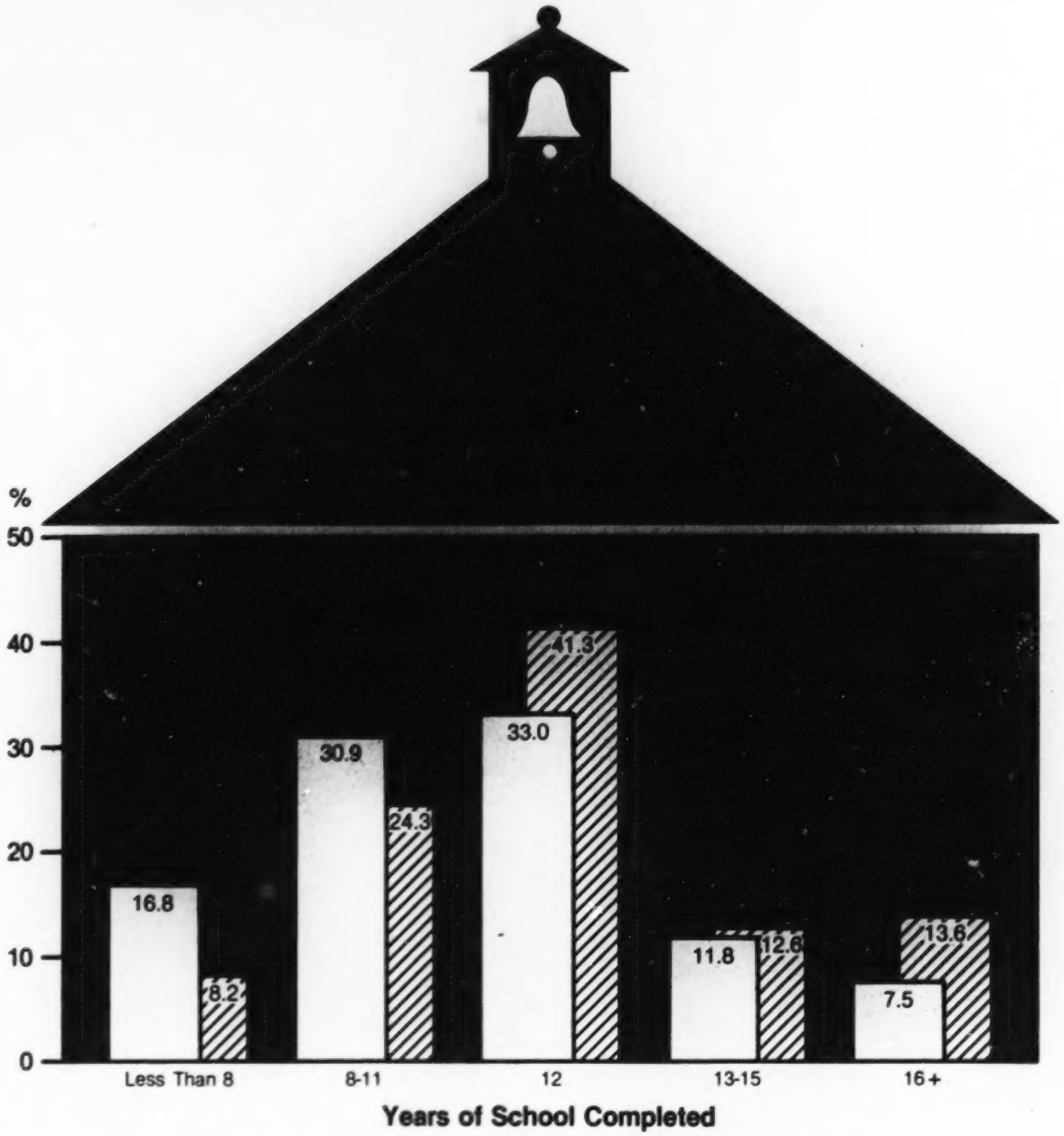
Education

Disabled persons are *much less well-educated* than are others of working age. Only one disabled adult in every five has attended some college, compared with one in three nondisabled individuals in the 16-64 age range. By contrast, disabled persons are more than four times as likely to have fewer than eight years of schooling as are nondisabled working-age adults.

Given that most persons with disabilities became disabled later in life, this is an intriguing finding. One obvious explanation for the data would be that disabled persons, being on average much older than nondisabled persons, reflect education attainment levels of older persons in general. But as Figure 2 shows, this apparent explanation is not particularly helpful. Comparing the oldest group of nondisabled persons, those aged 55-64, to the disabled working-age population as a whole, we find that even this body of relatively old persons who do not have disabilities is better educated than is the working-age population of disabled persons. A neater explanation: persons with little education tend to enter highly physical occupational categories; they also tend to be poor. In other words, those individuals who are less well-educated and less well off financially are the ones most susceptible to disability.

Figure 2

Years of School Completed: Disabled Population Aged 16-64 and Nondisabled Population Aged 55-64 Not in Institutions



Source: Current Population Survey, March 1981

Have the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 and Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act had an effect as yet upon education attainments of disabled persons? The answer is these data do not tell us. Regulations implementing these statutes appeared in 1977, when the youngest persons included in these data already were 12 years of age; similarly, only four years elapsed between publication of these two sets of Federal rules and collection of data for the 1981 Current Population Survey. Program studies are more likely to show the impact of these regulations than are household surveys. Nevertheless, the 1990 Census may help to some extent if implementation and enforcement of these two statutes continue throughout the 1980's.

Table 3 offers a comparison between working-age disabled and nondisabled persons with respect to education attainment.

Residence

Persons with work disabilities are somewhat less likely than are other adults of working age to live in cities. While two in three disabled adults reside in metropolitan areas, almost seven in ten nondisabled adults do.

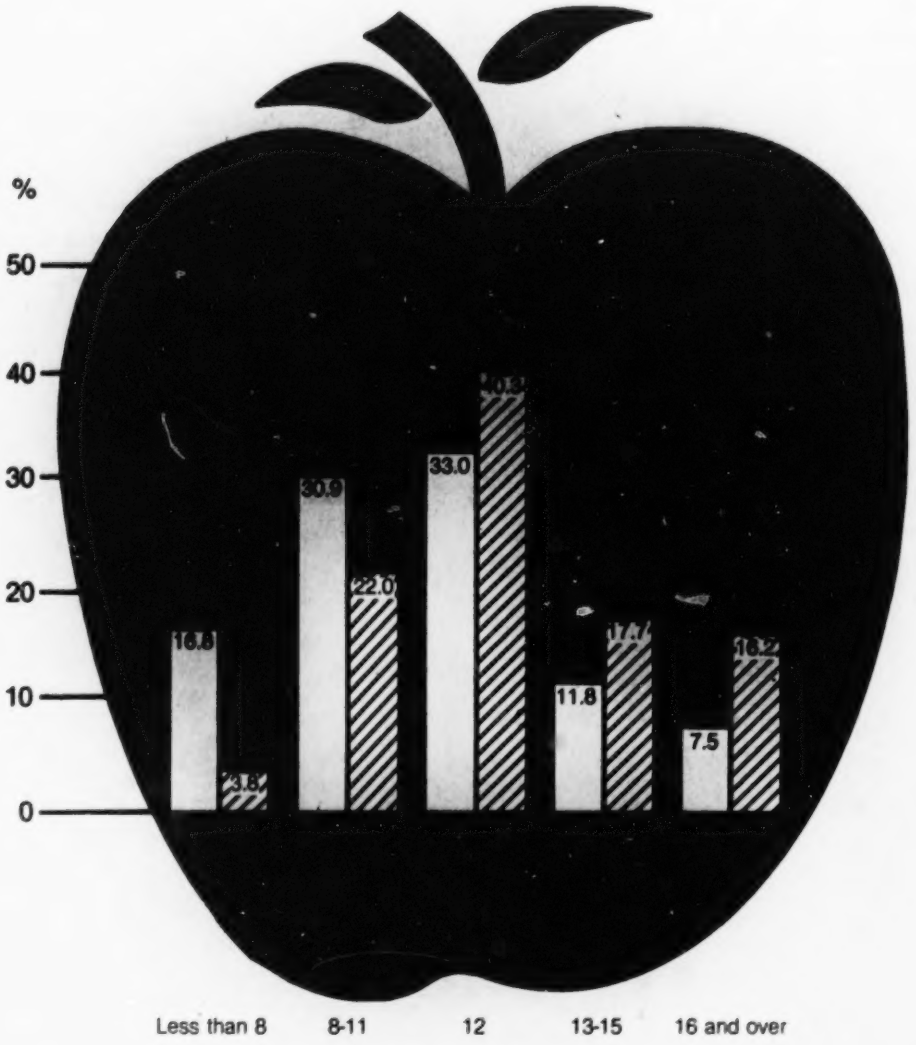
Of those who live in cities, disabled persons are somewhat more likely to reside in the "central city" areas. Almost half of all disabled adults who live in metropolitan areas have a central-city residence, as against fewer than four in ten nondisabled adults. See Table 4.

About one-third of all disabled adults aged 16-64 and not in institutions reside in the Southeastern quarter of the country, as do about one-third of other individuals of working age. Slightly more than one-fifth in both populations live in the Northeast; about one in five in both groups live in the West. See Figure 3.

Residential patterns, then, are quite similar between the disabled and nondisabled populations. The data currently available do not reveal information about quality of housing; for that, we must await completion of the 1980 Census analyses. However, given that proportionally more

Table 3

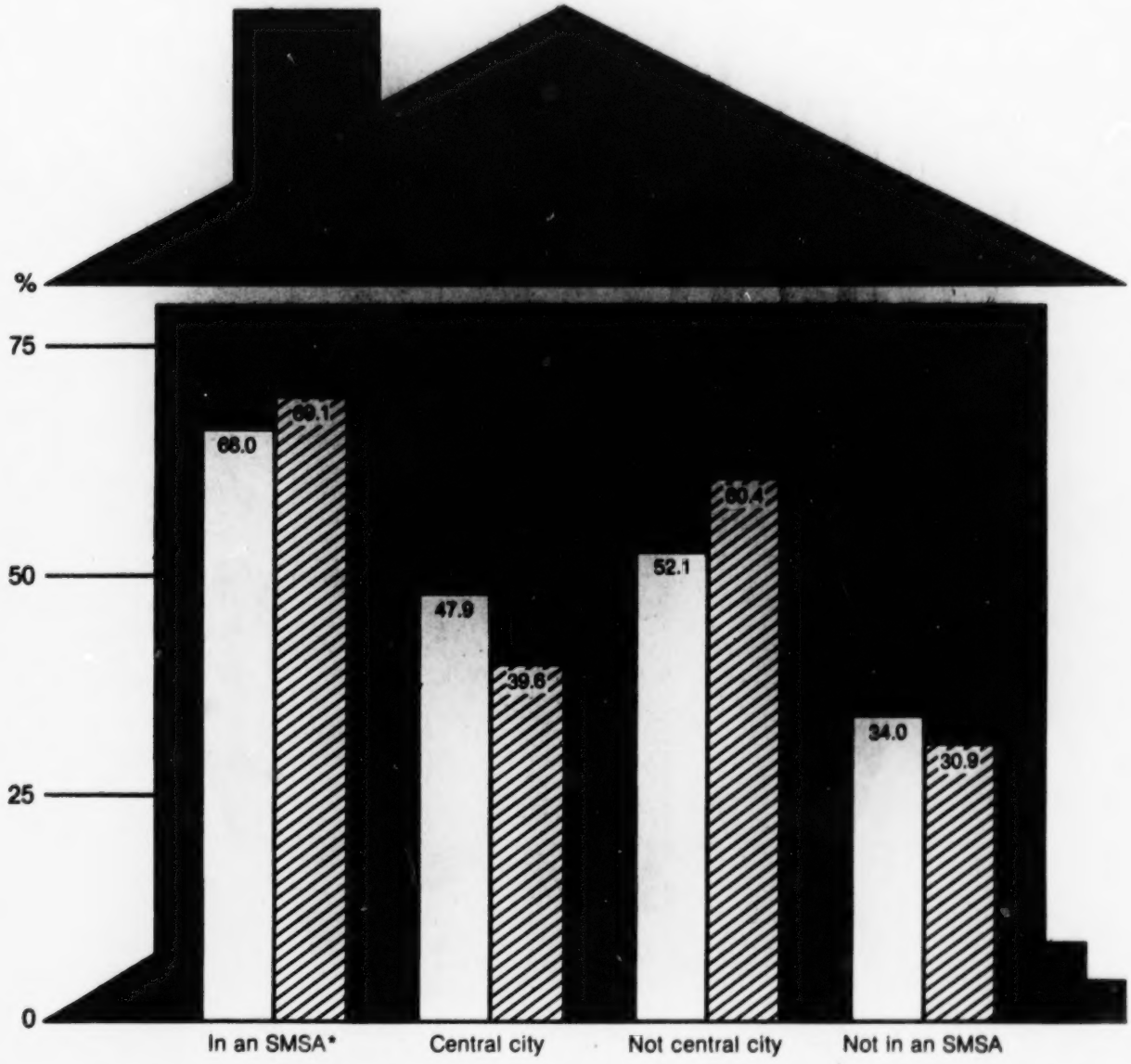
Years of School Completed: Disabled and Nondisabled Populations Aged 16-64 and Not in Institutions



Source: Current Population Survey, March 1981

Table 4

Residential Patterns: Disabled and Nondisabled Populations Aged 16-64 and Not in Institutions



*SMSA: A Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area consists of a "central city" having at least 50,000 people, plus surrounding counties. In 1980, there were 284 SMSA's in the United States.

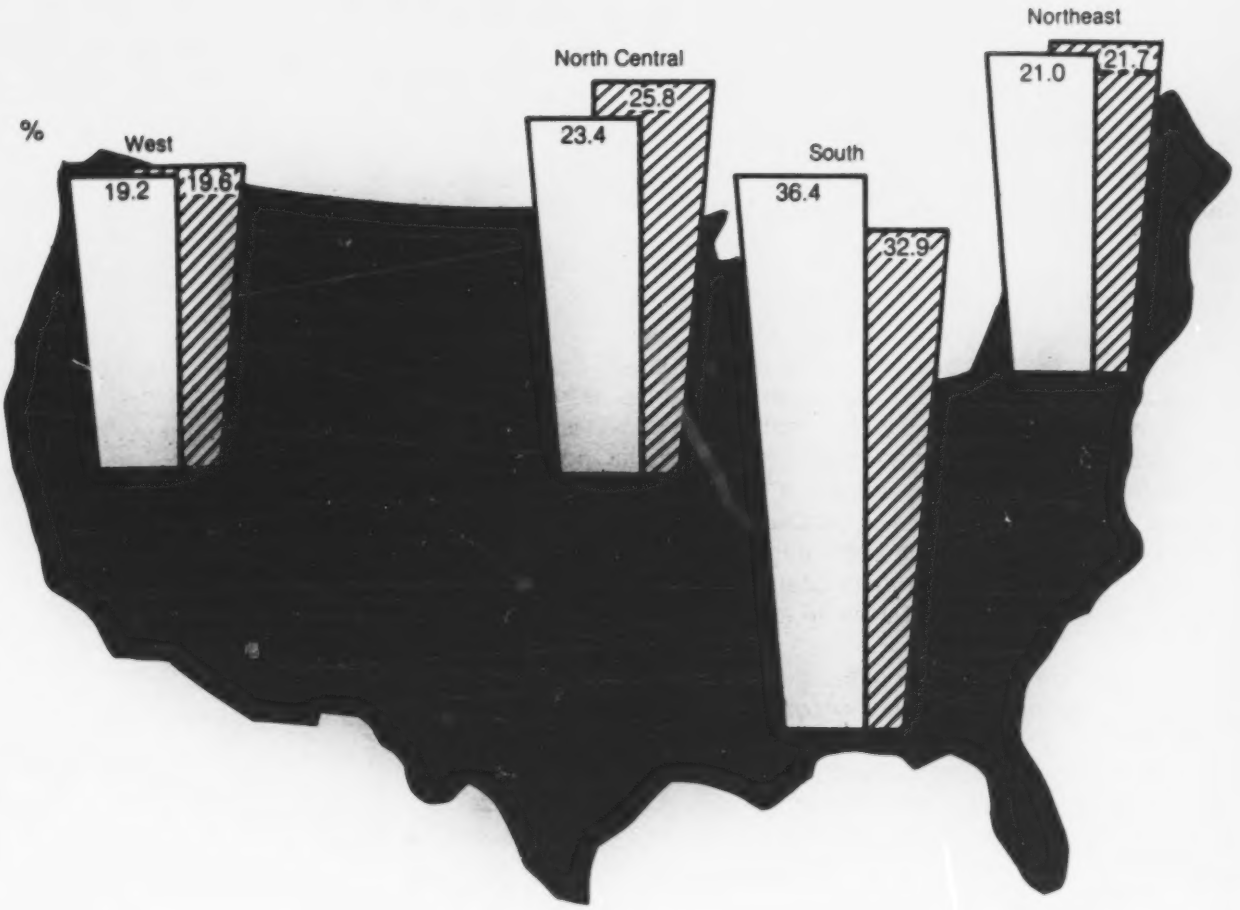
Disabled

Nondisabled

Source: Current Population Survey, March 1981

Figure 3

Geographical Distribution: Disabled and Nondisabled Populations Aged 16-64 and Not in Institutions



Source: Current Population Survey, March 1981

disabled persons reside in central-city locations, together with the income disparities to be discussed below, the 1981 Current Population Survey suggests that housing of disabled people generally is of lower quality.

Marital Status

Adults with work disabilities tend to be married, as do most adults. About 55% of disabled adults, as against 59% of all working-age adults, are married. Given that the disabled population is much older on average than is the general population, we should not be surprised to find that disabled persons are more than four times as likely to be widows. The stress attendant to disability, together with age-distribution factors, appears important in helping to understand why divorce and separation occur somewhat more often among disabled than among general population adults of working age.

Figure 4 offers an illustration of the proportions of disabled and general population adults reporting different marital status characteristics. That most disabled working-age adults are members of a family has important rehabilitation implications: the support of a spouse can be pivotal in medical and vocational interventions designed to assist persons with disabilities to become more independent and to work.

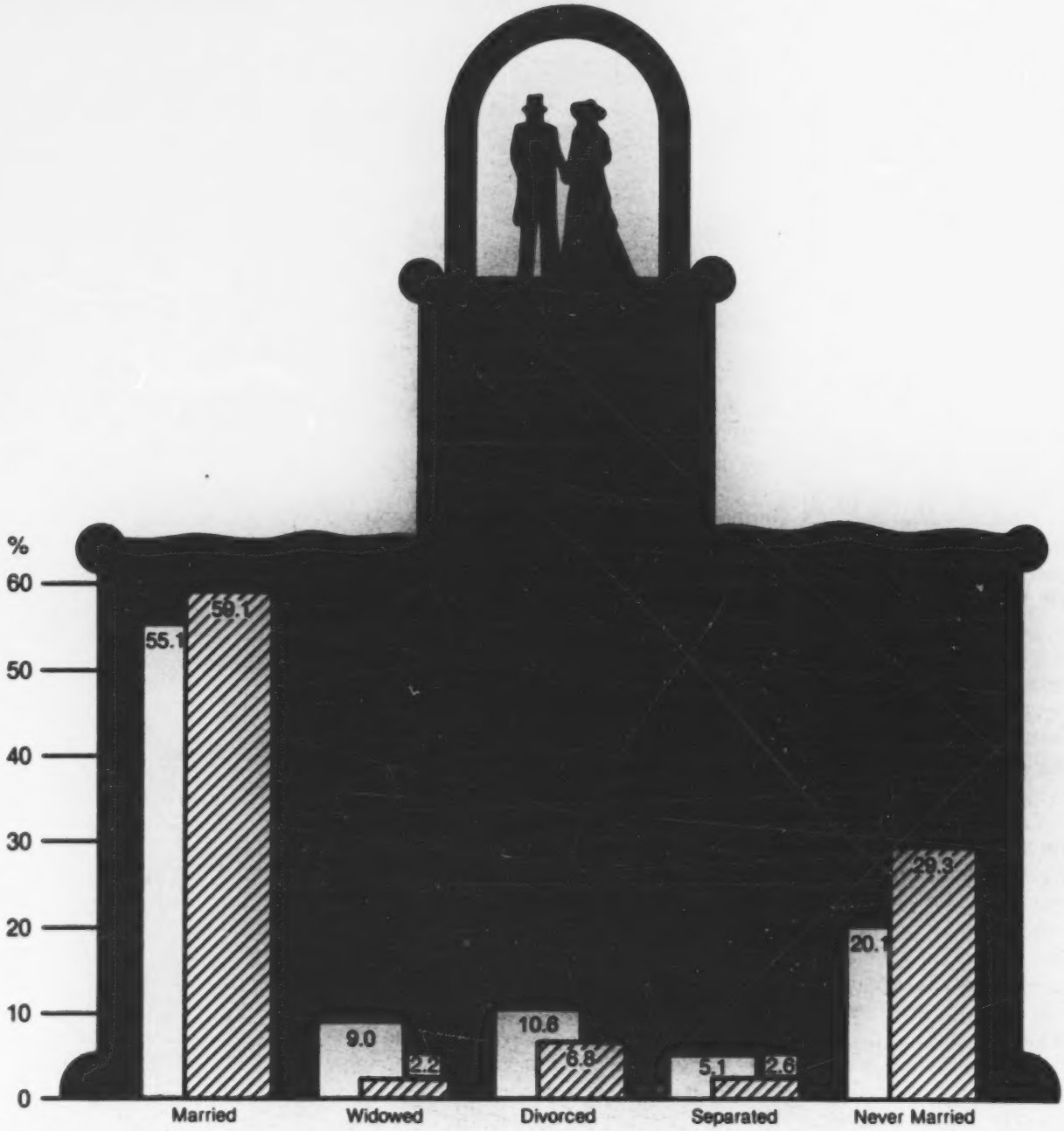
Labor Force Participation

Disabled persons are more likely to be out of than in the labor force. Only one in every three participates in the nation's work force. Among disabled men, the rate is about four in ten (41.8%); among disabled women, it is under one in four (23.5%).

The mirror image obtains in the nondisabled working-age population. Almost nine in ten men (88.3%) and 6.4 in ten women (64%) participate in the labor force.

Figure 4

Marital Status: Disabled and General Populations Aged 16-64 and Not in Institutions



Source: Current Population Survey, March 1981

That 58.2% of disabled men and 76.5% of disabled women are out of the labor force altogether is one of the most striking findings of the Census Bureau data examined in this publication. It means that most disabled persons are not actively looking for, nor participating in, work. The same data, however, tell us that many disabled persons do work. Slightly more than one-third (36.3%) of disabled men and 19.9% of disabled women are employed, most in full-time jobs.

Of those disabled persons who are actively seeking work, 13.1% of the men and 15.5% of the women cannot find it: they are officially unemployed. The comparable figures for nondisabled persons are: 8% for men and 7.5% for women.

We find that only one disabled male in every three and only one disabled woman in every five has a job. That two out of every three disabled men and four out of every five disabled women do not work is striking evidence of the difficulties disabled adults find in the labor market.

Is the picture truly that bad? Some of the effect may be attributed to the age of the working-age disabled population; recall that half of these persons are 50 years of age or older. And in fact, proportionally more disabled persons who are under 50 work than do older disabled individuals. Despite that fact, the proportion of disabled men working never exceeds 50% at any age level; most likely to be working are 25 to 34 year-olds, about half of whom work. Among women, the proportion working never exceeds 35%; again, the group most likely to work is that aged 25 to 34. If we look at the employment patterns of the 25 to 34 year-old group that is not disabled, we find that 88% of the men and 64% of the women work. Age alone, then, explains little of the massive effect we observe when we examine working patterns among disabled adults.

Could education attainment explain the differences? When we look at employment levels among those disabled persons who have college education, we find that a healthy 67% of the men and a relatively high 35% of the women have jobs. But, again, we see a major advantage

among nondisabled persons with similar levels of education; 93% of college-educated men and 75% of college-educated women have jobs. Education alone does not explain the data.

We are left with powerful evidence that disability presents major barriers to employment.

Table 5 displays information on labor force participation among disabled and nondisabled men and women of working age who are not in institutions. The unemployment figure is a proportion of all persons in the labor force who do not have jobs; these people are actively seeking employment but are unable to find it. Because the rate is a function of the number of persons in the labor force, rather than of the general working-age population, the numbers in Table 5 do not add up to 100%.

Figure 5 offers an illustration of the striking differences in employment and labor force status among males. [A similar illustration, this one for women, appears in *Disabled Women in America*.]

Figure 6 illustrates the comparison between disabled and nondisabled men who are employed; Figure 7 shows the proportions employed by years of school completed. For similar data on disabled females, see *Disabled Women in America*.

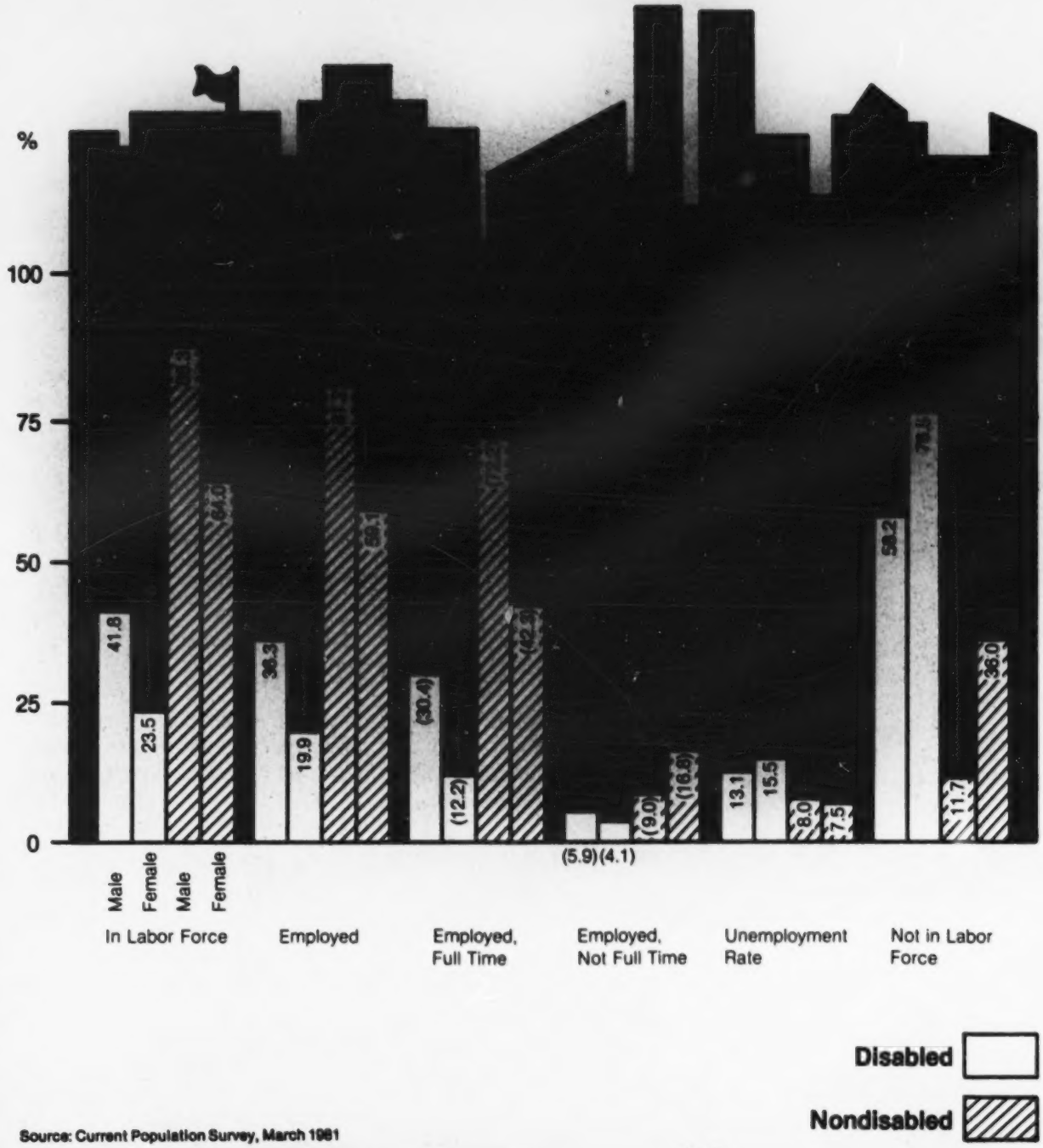
Income and Economic Status

While half of all Americans aged 16-64 had at least $8,000 in income from all sources in 1980, only three disabled persons in ten reached that level. Among women, one-third without disabilities received that much but only 13% with work disabilities did. Nondisabled men reached that level in two out of three instances, but disabled men received $8,000 or more in only 46% of the cases. Figure 8 compares disabled and nondisabled adults on income from all sources.

One disabled person in four had income below the 1980 poverty line; by contrast, only one nondisabled person in ten had so low an in-

Table 5

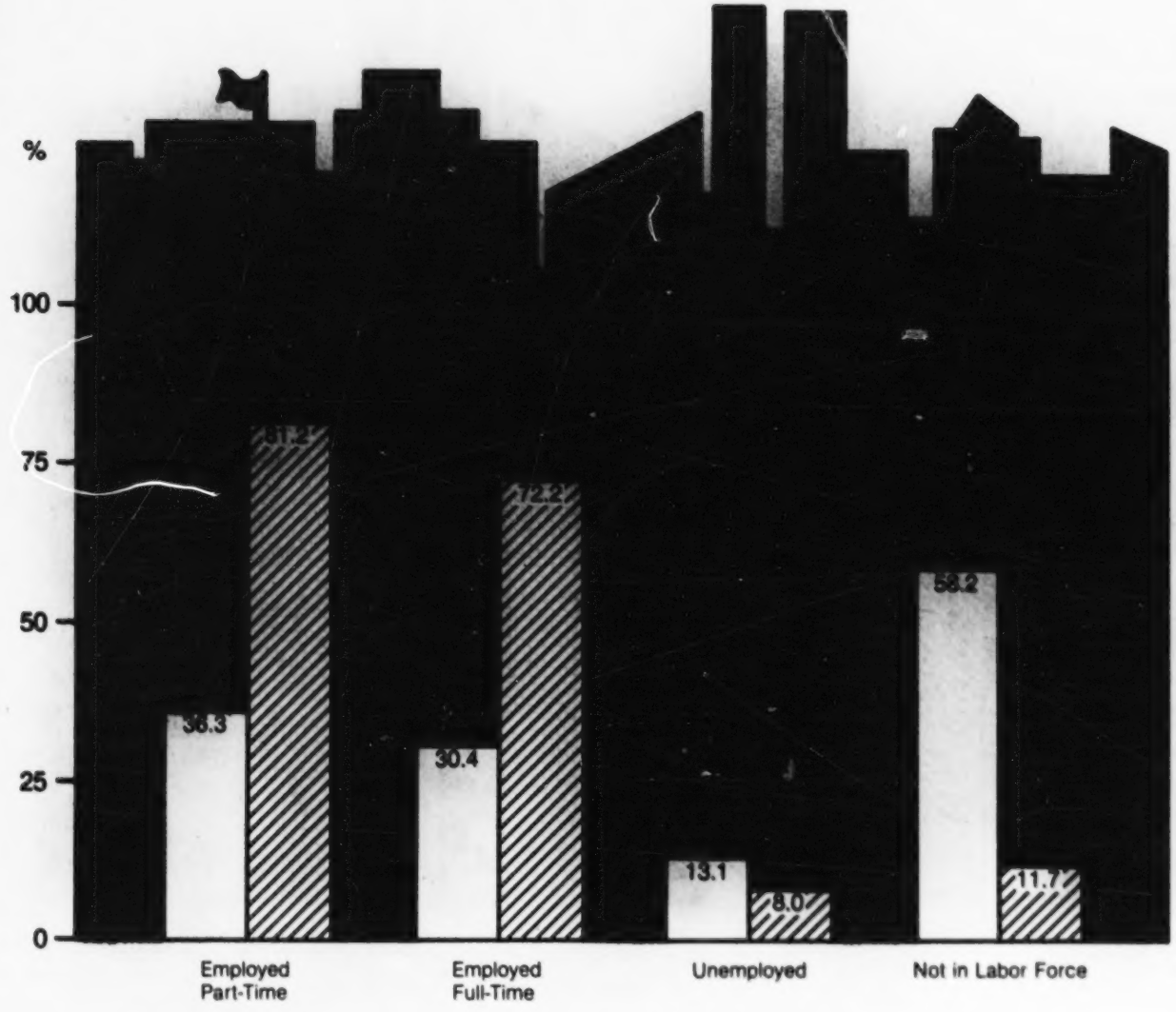
Labor-Force and Employment Status, by Sex: Disabled and Nondisabled Populations Aged 16-64 and Not in Institutions



Source: Current Population Survey, March 1981

Figure 5

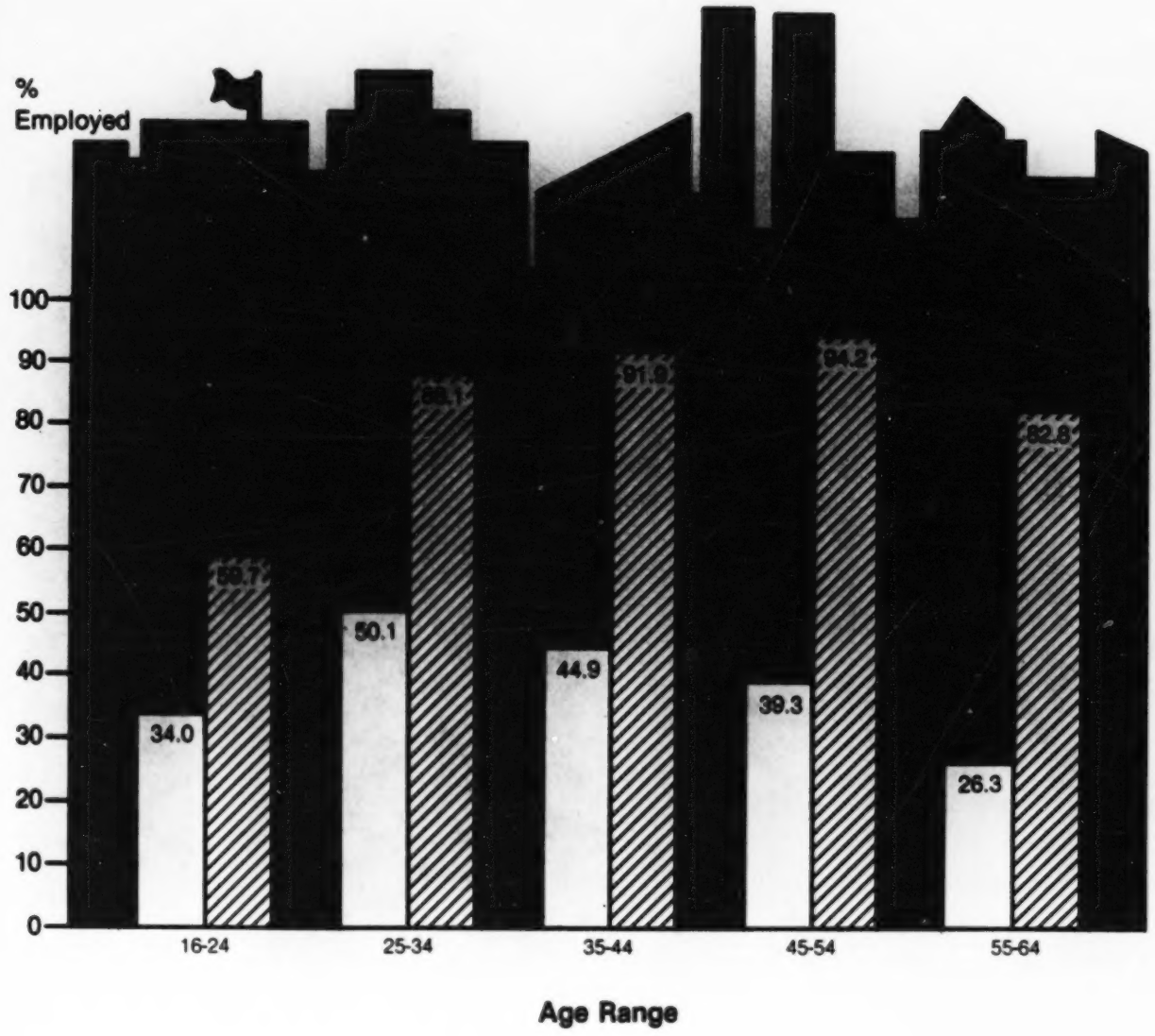
Labor-Force and Employment Status, by Disability Status: Males Aged 16-64 and Not in Institutions



Source: Current Population Survey, March 1981

Figure 6

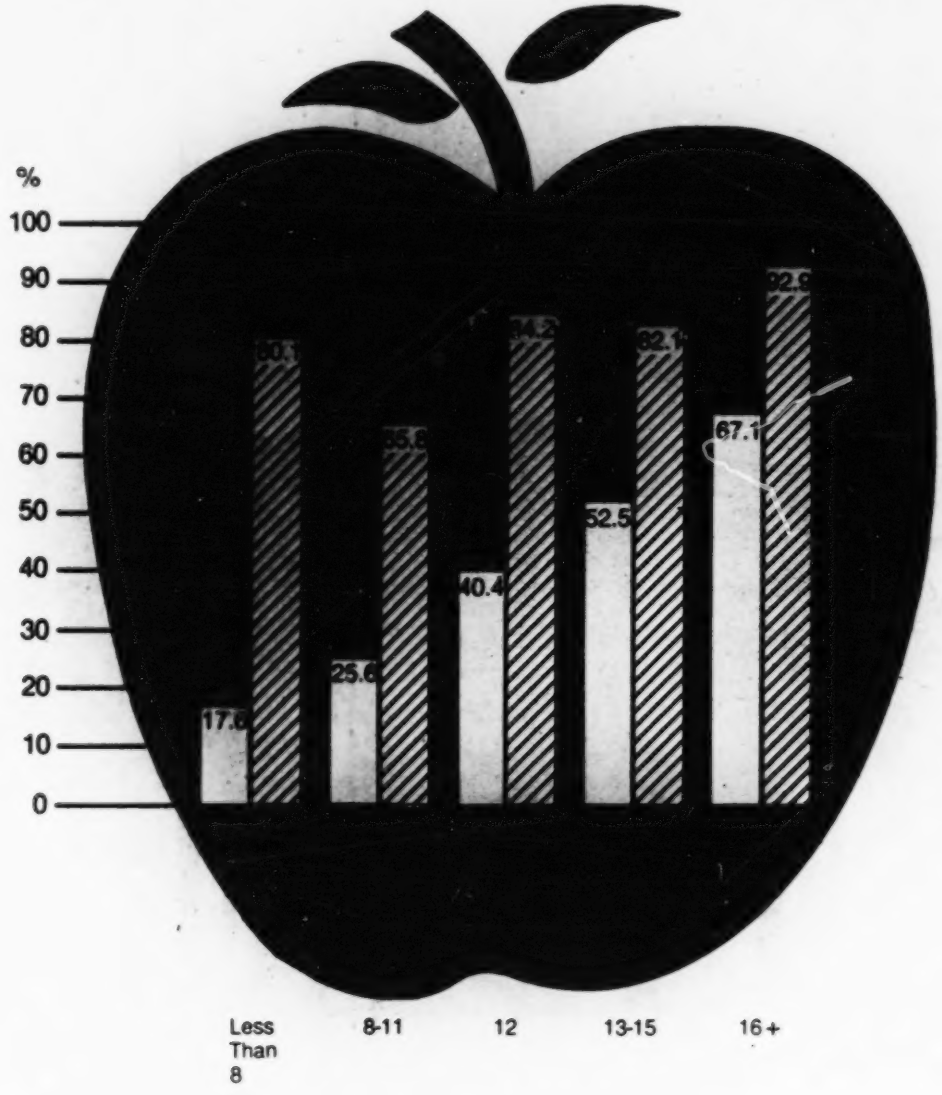
Proportions Employed, by Age Range and Disability Status: Males Aged 16-64 and Not in Institutions



Source: Current Population Survey, March 1981

Figure 7

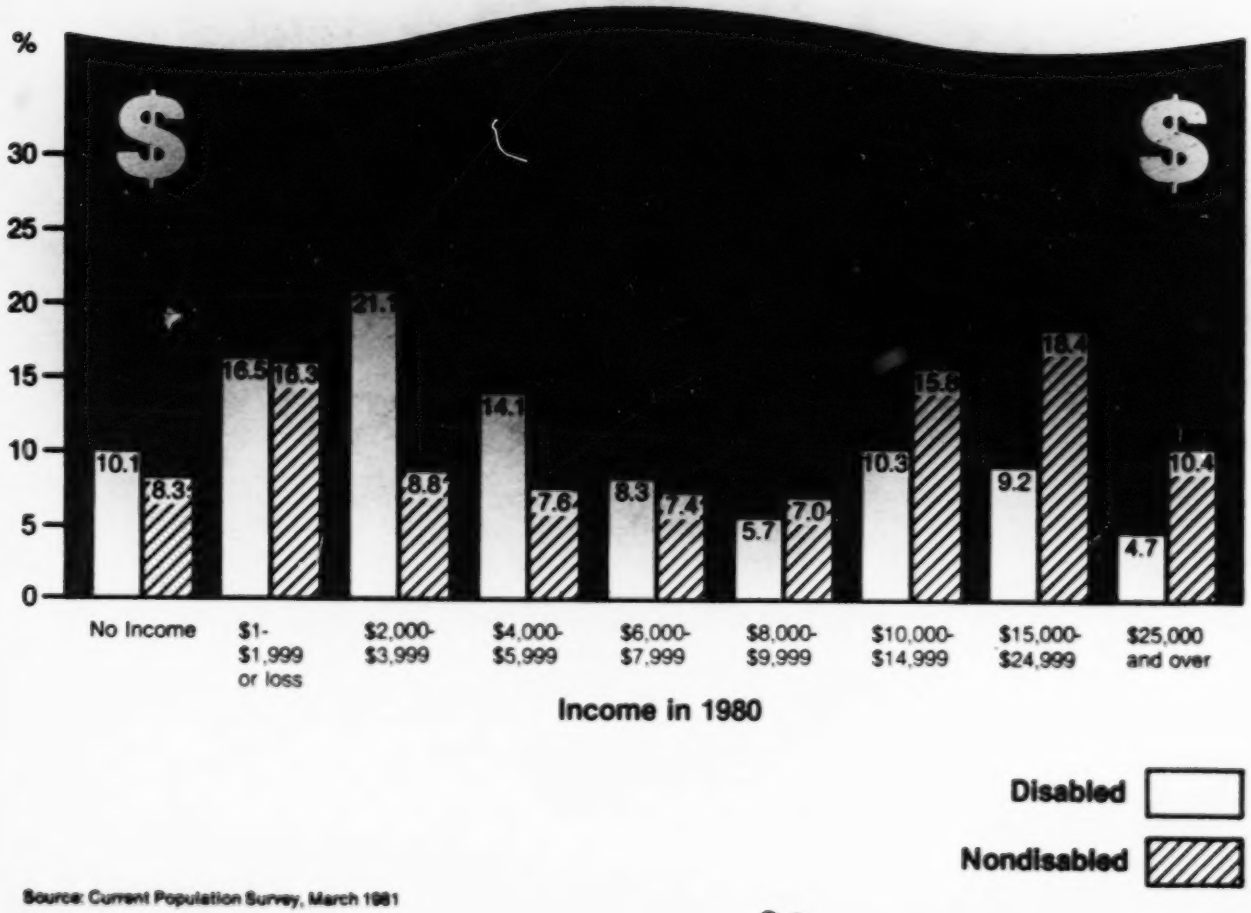
Proportions Employed, by Years of School Completed and Disability Status: Males Aged 16-64 and Not in Institutions



Source: Current Population Survey, March 1981

Figure 8

Income in 1980, by Disability Status: Adults Aged 16-64 and Not in Institutions



Source: Current Population Survey, March 1981

come. Among disabled males, one in five was below the poverty level, compared with one nondisabled male in twelve. Three disabled women in every ten fell below the poverty line in 1980, compared to one in eight nondisabled women.

If disabled people get jobs, and as we have seen that is a big "if," they tend to earn as much as do nondisabled workers. Mean income among disabled men working full time in 1980 was $18,755, as compared to $20,644 for nondisabled men working full time. Among women, the means were: disabled women, $10,569, and nondisabled women, $12,021, for full-time employment. More than half of all disabled men working full time (55%) made $15,000 or more, as compared to 61% of nondisabled full-time working males. Among women, 17% of disabled full-time workers as against 24% of nondisabled full-time employees earned at least $15,000.

The gap between disabled and nondisabled full-time workers is larger than it appears from these figures. Remember that the two populations are different in age structure. The average full-time disabled employee is in the peak of his or her career at age 44. The typical full-time nondisabled worker, by contrast, is just 34 years of age.

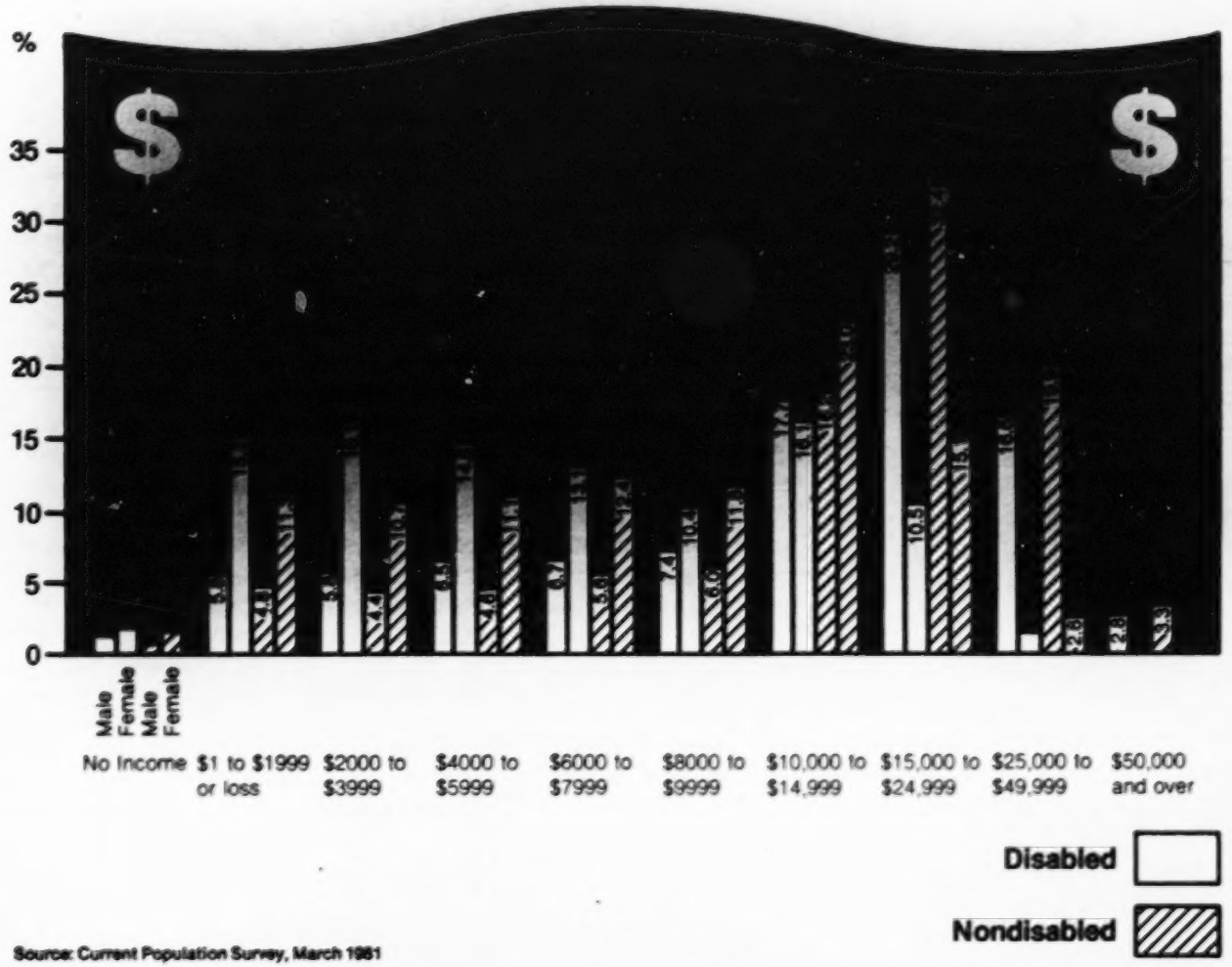
Table 6 presents data on income levels for disabled and nondisabled men and women who had jobs in 1981. The table shows that disabled workers were more likely to report low levels of earnings and less likely to have high incomes. At about the $9,000 level, the relative proportions shift. Below that level, proportions of disabled persons in each income range exceed those of nondisabled workers; above that level, the proportions of disabled employees in each range fall below those of nondisabled persons. Incomes are reported for persons with full- or part-time, year-round or part-year jobs.

Occupational Category

Among employed persons aged 16-64 who were not in institutions, the disabled and nondisabled populations were similarly distributed among major occupational groups. Nondisabled persons were

Table 6

Income in 1980 of Persons Employed in March, 1981, by Sex and Work Disability Status: Adults Aged 16-64 and Not in Institutions



Source: Current Population Survey, March 1981

somewhat more likely to have "professional/technical" or "clerical" jobs, that is, to work in office settings, than were disabled persons. Workers with disabilities were more likely to have "service" jobs or "farm" positions, and slightly more likely to have "craft" or "operative" jobs, many of which involve work outside the traditional office setting. Work in outdoor areas or work with the hands is more likely than is routine office employment to be associated with disability.

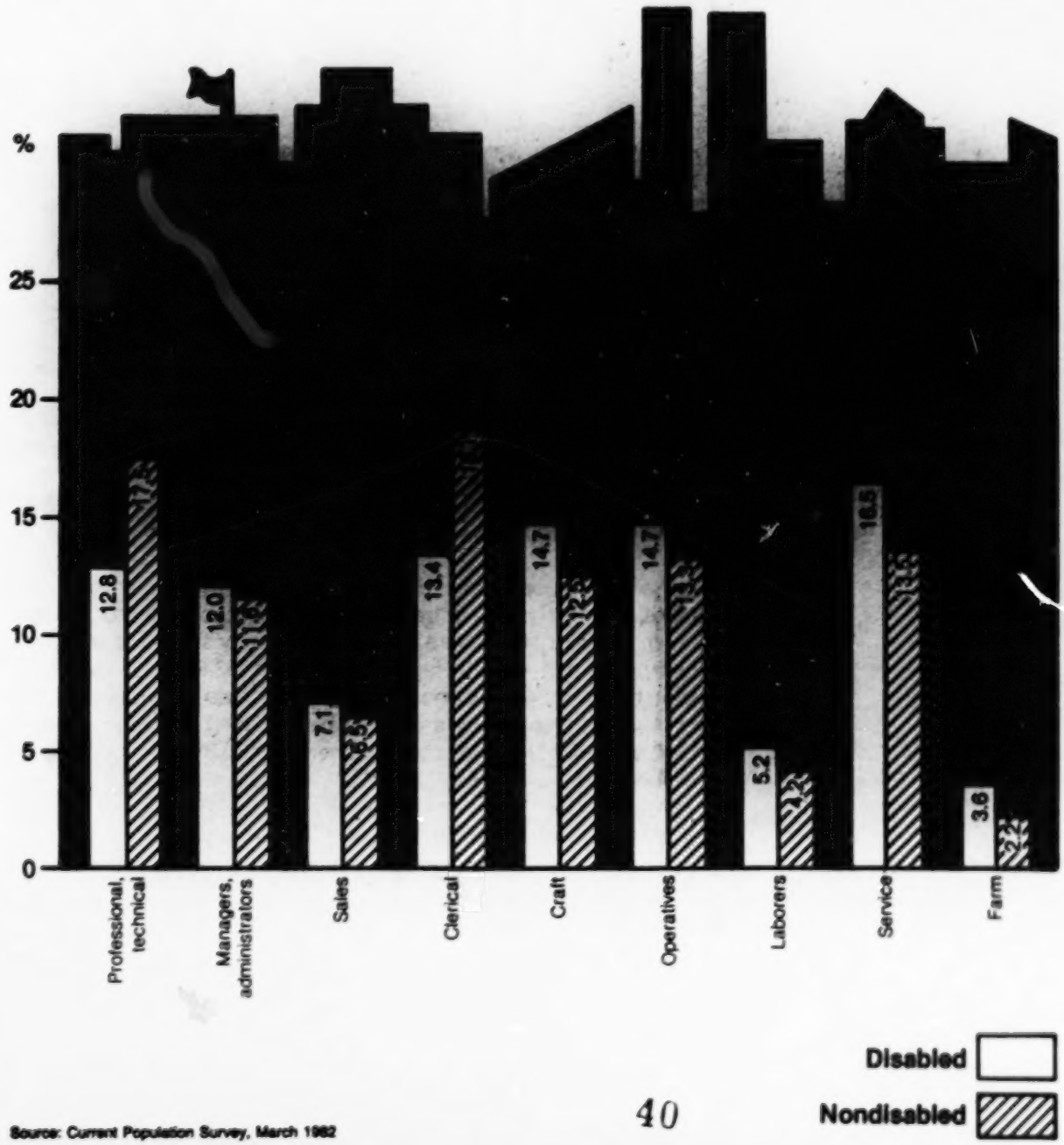
Disabled workers were almost twice as likely to be self-employed as were members of the nondisabled population. Finding it difficult to secure gainful employment from others, persons with disabilities may elect to become self-employed. Disabled women were self-employed twice as often as were nondisabled women: 10.8% versus 5.3%; among men, 16.8% of disabled persons as against 10.1% of nondisabled individuals were self-employed.

Self-employed persons often are not covered by pension or health plans. So we should not be surprised that disabled persons were much less likely than were nondisabled persons to have employee health and pension coverage. Among men, 33.9% of disabled persons but only 24.8% of nondisabled individuals were covered neither by a health plan nor by a pension plan; among women, the proportions were 46.0% for disabled women and 36.3% for nondisabled women.

Table 7 presents data on occupational category.

Table 7

Occupational Category, by Disability Status: Employed Adults Aged 16-64 and Not in Institutions



Source: Current Population Survey, March 1982

Technical Notes

1. The Current Population Survey is conducted each month by the Census Bureau, primarily to collect unemployment rate data. It features interviews with persons in 65,000 households nationwide. In March, 1981, the Census Bureau began asking disability-related questions. People in the demography field regard the CPS as highly accurate and useful. Its major advantage over the Census conducted each decade is that CPS data are available much more quickly. The chief limitation of the CPS is that its statistics, while reliable on a nationwide basis, cannot provide detailed information on state and local conditions. The CPS represents a major advance in Federal data collection with the nation's population of persons with disabilities in the author's opinion.

2. Other data sources the interested reader may wish to consult include the Social Security Administration's 1978 Survey of Disability and Work and the 1976 Survey of Income and Education. These studies asked very different questions of markedly different samples of persons, however, than characterize the CPS. Comparisons between studies should be made with great care.

   Another major information source is the Health Interview Survey, conducted annually by the National Center for Health Statistics. In the author's opinion, the HIS is an excellent source of information about disabled people.

3. Program studies conducted by the U.S. Education Department are also of interest. Each year, the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services collates state reports of participation in special education and in rehabilitation services.

4. Breakdowns of data by race and by sex were not attempted in this report. Please see the other three publications in this series of President's Committee reports for additional information about minority group members and women with disabilities.

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